

EVEN though Keith Mead is now fit, Steve Hardwick retains his place at centre-back for Wycombe Wanderers' visit to Hayes in the Berger Isthmian League Premier Division tonight (Tuesday).

Hardwick, who played in the Altrincham side that reached the semi-finals of the FA Trophy two seasons ago, made his league debut against Tooting on Saturday and gave a serene display alongside Alan Phillips.

So Mead is left out for the first time, when fully fit, since joining Blues back in January 1974. He has done and will no doubt continue to do valuable service for Wanderers but there have been signs this season that he has been short of pace.

This could well be a legacy of that ankle ligament injury he received against Leatherhead at the end of last season. It also probably explains why Mead lost the captaincy to Mick Holifield when Andy Williams took over.

Hardwick has yet to be severely tested while wearing a Blues shirt and if Hayes' record is anything to go by, that should not change tonight.

In six games this season Hayes have scored just seven goals but because of their fine defensive record — they have let in only four — they stand one place below Wycombe in the table with a game in hand.

Their good defensive performance is somewhat surprising since Alan Cox, their number one goalkeeper for the past five years has been forced to quit football because of a back injury.

Cox, 25, has been troubled for some time by his back and took the decision on specialist's advice. He joined Hayes from Millwall and since has made more than 150 league appearances.

But his deputy Alan Jarrett has served them so well in recent weeks, that he looks like making the spot his own.

Vic Akers, the former Cambridge United full-back is the new Hayes captain after joining from Dartford in the close season. He takes over from Bobby Goldthorpe who has been placed on the transfer list.

Two other departures from Church Road have seen Peter McGillicuddy released and former Wycombe favourite Dave Bullock transferred to Windsor and Eton of the Athenian League.

Along with Dulwich Hamlet, Hayes are the only unbeaten team in the league, but to make up for that they were knocked out of the FA Cup by Feltham in the shock of the opening round. New manager Martin Hackett, from Wembley, made no excuses for that defeat as Feltham played better on the day.

Hayes are likely to field the same side that drew 1-1 with Carshalton on Saturday, namely: A. Jarrett; A. Carrington, M. McGovern, R. Leather, V. Akers, L. Craker, R. Wiles, G. Bartlett, R. Nelson, N. Bunker, T. Brown. Sub.: G. Gilbert.

Horseman back

TONY HORSEMAN, who appeared to have played his last game at Loakes Park when he and Wycombe Wanderers parted company at the start of the season, makes a welcome return to the ground on Thursday night when he plays for Tring Town in a friendly with Wycombe Wanderers, kick-off 7.30 p.m.

When he first left Wycombe, Horseman said he wanted to take a break from football, but he returned to the game pretty quickly by signing for Tring, who are now managed by another old Wycombe favourite, John Delaney.

Delaney took over at the start of the season, and although he and Horseman have scored a number of goals, the side are still without a win. Lack of stamina seems the problem, for Tring have several times led with 15 minutes remaining, only to concede late goals.

They have drawn with Cheshunt and Worthing, and lost to Farnborough and Epping in the league. Egham defeated them 5-4 in the first round of the Hitachi Isthmian League Cup.

Wycombe are at home to Dagenham in the league on Saturday.

BERGER ISTHMIAN LEAGUE (9-9-78)

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|----------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| Croydon | 7 | 5 | 0 | 2 | 16 | 7 | 15 |
| Walthamstow | 7 | 5 | 0 | 2 | 11 | 6 | 15 |
| Dulwich | 7 | 4 | 3 | 0 | 7 | 2 | 15 |
| Woking | 7 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 17 | 11 | 14 |
| Hitchin | 7 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 11 | 8 | 13 |
| Wycombe | 7 | 4 | 0 | 3 | 13 | 6 | 12 |
| Hayes | 6 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 7 | 4 | 12 |
| Dagenham | 7 | 4 | 0 | 3 | 11 | 9 | 12 |
| Leatherhead | 6 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 11 | 3 | 11 |
| Slough | 7 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 7 | 8 | 11 |
| Barking | 6 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 16 | 11 | 10 |
| Enfield | 7 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 9 | 8 | 10 |
| B'hamwood | 7 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 9 | 10 | 8 |
| Oxford | 6 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 11 | 14 | 8 |
| Tooting | 7 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 9 | 13 | 7 |
| Hendon | 6 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 10 | 6 |
| Carshalton | 7 | 0 | 5 | 2 | 8 | 12 | 5 |
| Sutton | 7 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 12 | 5 |
| Ley'stone | 7 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 8 | 4 |
| Tilbury | 6 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 12 | 4 |
| Staines | 7 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 7 | 16 | 4 |
| Kingston | 7 | 0 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 13 | 3 |